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## Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta

The Discourse on the Shorter Catechism<sup>1</sup> | M 44

Theme: The nature of the awakened mind

Translated by Piya Tan ©2011

### 1 Sutta summary and highlights

**1.0 METHOD OF STUDY & REFLECTION.** Although the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta is straightforward in structure, its contents are deep, reflecting the awakened mind of the arhat nun Dhamma,dinnā.<sup>2</sup> The questioner, the non-returner layman Visākha, also shows his wisdom in asking the right questions [3]. These teachings are briefly explained under “Sutta teachings” [2]. Here is a suggestion for sutta reflection:

- (1) Read right through the whole sutta.
- (2) Read the questions and answers according to their sets [1.1].
- (3) Read the explanations for that set under “Sutta teachings” [2] or other commentaries.
- (4) Spend a quiet moment, just sitting watching the breath (or doing any suitable meditation), letting go of all thoughts, or simply spending solitude with nature.
- (5) In a quiet moment, reflect on what you have read and learned, to see how far you have understood and what you have realized further.

Repeat steps (2)-(5) whenever you need or wish to.

**1.1 SUTTA HIGHLIGHTS.** The Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta (M 44) is a dialogue between the nun (*bhikkhuni*) Dhamma,dinnā and the layman (*upāsaka*) Visākha. The Sutta is quite straightforward: it opens with the layman Visākha meeting and asking the nun Dhamma,dinnā a series of questions and her answers dealing with these 8 areas:

<u>Sections</u>	<u>Question sets</u>	<u>Introduction</u>	<u>Topics</u>
§§2-8	Nos 1-7	[2.1]	self-identity ( <i>sakkāya</i> ), including clinging ( <i>upādāna</i> )
§§9-11	Nos 8-10	[2.2]	the noble eightfold path ( <i>ariya aṭṭh’āṅgika magga</i> )
§12	No 11	[2.3]	the nature of mental cultivation ( <i>samādhi</i> )
§§13-15 <sup>3</sup>	Nos 12-14	[2.4]	formations ( <i>sankhāra</i> ) (3 kinds)
§§16-21	Nos 15-20	[2.5]	cessation of perception and feeling ( <i>saññā,vedayita,nirodha</i> )
§§22-24	Nos 21-23	[2.6]	feelings ( <i>vedanā</i> )
§§25-28	Nos 24-27	[2.7]	latent tendencies ( <i>anusaya</i> )
§29	Nos 28-34	[2.8]	opposites ( <i>paṭibhāga</i> ) (total of 7 short questions)

As evident from the above list, we can count a total of 34 questions in the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta. THICH Minh Chau (1964:270), however, lists only 30 in the Chinese version. Out of these, a total of 22 are common to both. Where the Chinese [1.2.2] and the Tibetan [1.2.1] versions differ, the Tibetan version is closer to the Pali sutta. Thus, notes **Analyo**, “the present case does not fully conform to a general tendency of Madhyama Āgama quotations in Śamatha,deva’s commentary on the Abhidharma,kośa,bhāṣya (AbhkT) to be similar to their Chinese Madhyama Āgama counterparts, noted by Skilling 2004:6.” (2011: 277 n66).<sup>4</sup>

For further details on the topics themselves, see below [2].

### 1.2 SUTTA VERSIONS

**1.2.1 Number of questions.** The series of questions and answers between the nun Dhamma,dinnā and her questioner Visākha differ in the three extant versions. Some questions from the Pali sutta are not found in its Chinese and Tibetan parallels, and some questions from the Chinese and Tibetan discourse

<sup>1</sup> A catechism is “a course of questions and answers” (OED), ie a series of questions put to an individual (such as a student, scholar or political candidate) to elicit their views.

<sup>2</sup> On the nun Dhamma,dinnā and her erstwhile husband, Visākha, see (3) below.

<sup>3</sup> The questions in §§13-21 recur in **Kāma,bhū S 2** (S 41.6), see SD 48.7 (2.2) for comparative table.

<sup>4</sup> For another exception to this pattern, see Schmithausen 1987:338.

are not found in the Pali.<sup>5</sup> In fact, even the Chinese and the Tibetan versions, both believed to be handed down from closely related lines of transmission, differ from each other.<sup>6</sup> **The Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** has a Chinese parallel in the Madhyama Āgama<sup>7</sup> [1.2.2] and a complete version is preserved as a sutta quotation in Śamatha,deva’s commentary on the Abhidharma,kośa,bhāṣya, extant in the Tibetan.<sup>8</sup>

**1.2.2 The Chinese version.** While M 44 gives its venue as the Bamboo Grove outside Rāja,gaha, MĀ 210 and Abhkṭ say that it is in Jeta’s grove outside Śrāvastī. In accordance with the different identity of their protagonists, the Pali version is situated in Rāja,gaha, the hometown of Dhammadinnā’s husband, the merchant Visākha, while the Madhyama Āgama version takes place at Sāvathī, the town where lady Visākha is living. Although the Tibetan version is also located at Sāvathī, it agrees with the Pali version in as much as here Dhammadinnā’s visitor is the male Visākha.<sup>9</sup>

M 44 give the questioner as the layman Visākha and the answerer is the nun Dhamma,dinnā. The Madhyama Āgama, however, says that Dhamma,dinnā’s questioner is the famous female lay disciple Visākha, also known as Migara’s Mother.<sup>10</sup> Apparently, here that the Chinese translator must have mistaken her for the namesake Visākha.

The Chinese parallel in the Madhyama Āgama, MĀ 210,<sup>11</sup> has been translated into English in THICH MINH CHAU (1991: 269-278), which titles it as “the Discourse by the Bhikṣuṇī [called] ‘Delight in the Dharma’,” 法樂比丘尼經 *fālè bīqiūni jīng*(T1543/788a14). As such, MĀ 210 differs in the name of the discourse’s questioner, where 法樂 *fālè* might correspond to Dharma,nandā, or, as suggested by Minh Chau, to Dharma,nandī (1991: 24). A discourse in the Ekōttarika Āgama, on the other hand, renders the name Dharma,dinnā more appropriately as 法施比丘尼 *fāsī bīqiūni* (T125/803c23). [3]

## 2 Sutta teachings: The catechism [§§2-29]

**2.0** Here we will briefly look at some key or interesting points regarding the 8 areas that the layman Visākha covers in his questions to the nun Dhamma,dinnā, giving us new insights into the Dharma. Other than this, all the topics have been discussed elsewhere in the SD series (with their cross-references and citations given). For a fuller benefit, we should read through the whole section at least once, and then look up the related references of whatever that are of interest.

**2.1 SELF-IDENTITY [§§2-8].** The very first set of **questions (1-7)** is about self-identity (*sakkāya*), with an additional one on clinging (*upādāna*). *Sakkāya* (*sat + kāya*; BHS *satkāya*) translates as either “existing body or group” or “own body or group” (note here that “body” has the sense of “group,” as in

<sup>5</sup> M 44 has been studied by Foley 1894 and Krey 2010. It has been tr in Ñāṇamoli (2005) with the title of “The Shorter Series of Questions and Answers” (M:ÑB 396-403).

<sup>6</sup> See Table 5.3 in Analayo 2011:278.

<sup>7</sup> MĀ 210 @ T1543/788a16-790b7. It has been tr and studied by Minh Chau 1964/1991: 56, 75, 76, 98, 105-106, 113, 269-278.

<sup>8</sup> Abhdk at D (4094) *mngon pa, ju 6b2-11a5* or Q (5595) *tu 7a7-12b1*; cf also Abhdk 1:6 in Pradhan 1967:4,7 paralleling M 44/1:304,19 with the discourse title as *chos sbyin gyi mdo*, “the discourse by Dharma,dinnā.” on the Tibetan version cf. Schmithausen 1987: 338-343, Skilling 2001a:148, and Vetter 2000:121-127, for a tr, see Analayo 2011b. For discourse quotations in AbhdkT that parallel parts of M 44 (not all of them necessarily specific to the present discourse): see Analayo 2011:276 n62, further see nn 68, 72, 75, 86, 106, 107.

<sup>9</sup> Abhkṭ introduces “[Vi-]sakha” by qualifying him with the Tibetan equivalent to *āyuṣmān*, D (4094) *mngon pa, ju 6b3* or Q (5595) *tu 7b1*: *tshe dang ldan pa sa ga*, but then classifies him as a layman, D (4094) *mngon pa, ju 6b4* or Q (5595) *tu 7b2*: *dge bsnyen sa ga*, although then Dhammadinnā addresses him again as *āyuṣmān*, D (4094) *mngon pa, ju 6b4* or Q (5595) *tu 7b2*: *tshe dang ldan pa*, a form of address she continues using throughout; cf also the discussion below p517 on the use of *āyasmā* or *āyuṣmān* to address laity. (Analayo 2011:277 n65)

<sup>10</sup> MA 210 @ T1.788a17: 毘舍佉優婆夷 *pīshèqū yōupóyí*. The \*Mahāvibhāṣā tr by Xuánzàng (玄奘) quotes part of this discourse and agrees with M 44 on the layman Visākha is questioner, T1545/27.780c7: 毘舍佉波索迦 *pīshèqū wūbōsuōjiā*. The Vibhāṣā tr by Buddhavarman, however, agrees with MA 210, that the laywoman disciple Visākha is the questioner, T1546/28.337b7: 毘舍佉優婆夷 *pīshèqū yōupóyí*. For a more detailed discussion of this difference on the identity of Dhammadinnā’s visitor, see Analayo 2007i:32-34.

<sup>11</sup> MĀ 210 @ T1543/788a16-790b7.

“student body” or “governing body”). It does not merely refer to a physical body, and has no notion of any kind of permanence. Any idea of permanence is what we wrongfully project or wishfully attribute to it. As such, *sakkāya, diṭṭhi* means “view(s) regarding the existing body (as being a permanent self, containing such a self, or related in some way to such a self).”<sup>12</sup>

It is important to note here is that the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta defines self-identity as the 5 aggregates [§2.2]. Any kind of self-view or notion of an abiding entity (such as an eternal soul) must be in connection with one of these 5 aggregates or an aspect of one of them.<sup>13</sup> They are, however, all impermanent.<sup>14</sup> As such, it is impossible to really conceive of any kind of abiding entity in connection with humanity or any kind of living being or anything else. Any religious conception of an eternal soul, for example, is only a matter of faith, not of fact. Since such a belief is not a reality, it is a false view, and as such has no real benefit in the spiritual life. In fact, it hinders, even hurts, any development in our spiritual awakening.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.2 THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH [§§9-11]

**2.2.1 The eightfold path as an ideal.** Questions 8-10 concern the noble eightfold path (*ariya aṭṭh’-aṅgika magga*). The first of the two questions here simply lists the eightfold path [§9]. The second question is about the relationship between the path (magga) and the 3 aggregates (khandha) [§10], and this is what we will examine further here.

Firstly, according to the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta, the eightfold path and the 3 aggregates (often famously referred to as the 3 trainings, sikkhā)<sup>16</sup> are not synonymous. When we speak of the eightfold path, we must understand that it, after all, comprises 8 factors (*aṅga*). All the factors are intrinsically linked together, like the eight spokes of a turning wheel. In terms of practice, this should at least be our vision of the path: there is on it a vehicle with four wheels (the 4 right efforts), complete and working in all respects.

The eight spokes emanating from the wheel’s common hub seems to give us the idea that all the spokes have the same function and strength. It is clear from **the Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta** (M 117), however, that right view “comes first and foremost” (*pubbaṅ, gama*),<sup>17</sup> meaning that it must underlie each and every other factor. It is what makes that factor “right” (*sammā*), that is, empowers it to act together with the other factors in keeping us on “the right track” (living a wholesomely spiritual life here and now) and propelling us in the right direction, towards liberation and nirvana.

But the figure here is an ideal one: a mental image of perfection, as a path or way (*paṭipada*), as stated in the Dhammapada, thus:

<i>Maggān’ aṭṭh’ aṅgiko seṭṭho</i>	The eightfold path is the best of paths.	(Dh 273a)
<i>Eso’ va maggo natth’ añño</i>	This is the only path, no other,	
<i>dassanassa visuddhiyā</i>	for the purification of wisdom.	(Dh 274ab)

## 2.2.2 The eightfold path as practice

2.2.2.1 “THE AGGREGATES ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE PATH.” Secondly, we have the famous “gradual training,”<sup>18</sup> a sort of preparation for the journey on the path, so to speak (a sort of mental and spiritual journey into inner space). If we are going on an extended journey, we must

- (1) be physically healthy (referring to restraint in body and speech, that is, training in moral virtue);
- (2) be mentally prepared (referring to clearing away unwholesome states of mind, or mental cultivation), and

<sup>12</sup> On some translation problems, see Harvey 1996:92.

<sup>13</sup> See eg Gethin 1986:41, 44 f.

<sup>14</sup> See eg **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59/3:66-68 ≈ Mv 1.6.38-47 @ V 1:13 f), SD 1.2.

<sup>15</sup> See **Is there a soul?** SD 2.16 & SID: anattā.

<sup>16</sup> On the 3 trainings, see **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6 & SID: ti, sikkhā.

<sup>17</sup> M 117/3:71-78 (esp §§4, 10, 16, 22, 28, 34 f), SD 6.10.

<sup>18</sup> On the gradual training, see **The gradual way**, SD 56.1.

- (3) knowing everything (as far as possible) about the journey and destination (cultivating the wisdom of keeping to the purpose and goal of our practice, learning from our mistakes, and building on our strengths and learning).

As such, each of these three aggregates (*khandha*), being aggregates, only forms a part of the whole. Each aggregate is incomplete *in itself* (even as a set)—for example, being morally virtuous alone is not enough for liberation—but forms a part of the whole path. Hence, it is said, “**The 3 aggregates, avuso Visākha, are not included in the noble eightfold path**” [§11.2].

2.2.2.2 READING THE LOCATIVE AS INSTRUMENTAL. The eightfold path is here like a strong rope comprising three inter-woven strands (K Ñāṇananda’s figure).<sup>19</sup> We are using this strong rope to climb out of danger and suffering, and up to safety. At different moments, our hands or fingers may touch a different strand, but we must hold on to the whole rope, without ever letting it go (until we have reached total safety). Each of these aggregates or training has only one purpose, that is, to safely keep us on track to towards the safe highway, the eightfold path itself.

Hence, it is said, “**But it is the noble eightfold path that is included in [by] the three aggregates**” [§11.2]. Why is there the alternate readings “in [by]” here? This is based on **Buddhaghosa’s** helpful note: “Although the text explains ‘In the moral virtue aggregate’ in the locative case, the meaning, however, should be understood in the instrumental case” (*kiñcāpi hi pāḷiyam, sila-k,khandhe ’ti bhummena niddeso kato, attho pana karaṇa,vasen’eva veditabbo*, Vism 16.96/514). In other words, the 3 aggregates are neither *numerically* nor sequentially present “in” the eightfold path, but they function *with* the whole path in mind.<sup>20</sup>

### **2.2.3 The spirit of the training**

2.2.3.1 COMMENTARIAL EXPLANATION. The explanation here [2.2] is supported by the Sutta commentary, which explains the phrase, “**the noble eightfold path that is included (*saṅgahita*) in the three aggregates,**” as follows:

(This phrase [§11.2] means that) here whatever is the path is “surrounded by its districts” (*sa-p,padesa*), (but) the three aggregates are “without districts” (*ni-p,padesa*).<sup>21</sup> As such, this state of being “surrounded by districts” is like a city is surrounded by the kingdom, that is, by districts; thus it is comprised (*saṅgahita*) of the three aggregates, which are “not surrounded by districts.”

*Tīhi ca kho, āvuso visākha, khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅgahito ’ti ettha yasmā maggo sappadeso, tayo khandhā nippadesā, tasmā ayam sappadesattā nagaram viya rajjena nippadesehi tīhi khandhehi saṅgahito.*  
(MA 2:361 = Vism 16.95/514)

2.2.3.2 BUDDHAGHOSA’S PARABLES. Building on this, **Buddhaghosa** gives a very instructive explanation of **question 10** [§11] in his **Visuddhi,magga**.<sup>22</sup> Using the parable of the three friends, he illustrates how the three trainings work in unison to gain the eightfold path. During a festival, three friends see a flowering champak tree. The fragrant flowers, however, are way too high up. So the first friend bends down, and the second stands on his back, but he is unable to reach the flowers because of his unsteadiness. Then the third friend, stands and offers his shoulders. The second, now stands steadily with his

<sup>19</sup> K Ñāṇananda 2005 (3):341-343.

<sup>20</sup> For Gethin’s insightful explanations here, see 2001:210-212.

<sup>21</sup> Only *sappadesa* occurs elsewhere, apparently only in **Nivāpa S** (M 25) in the phrase *samantā sappadesam anu-parivāreyyāma*, “what if we surrounded the whole area” and *...anuparivāresum*, “they surrounded the whole area” (M 25/1:153,19+22, 154,25+28, 155,12+18; MA 2:161). PED: *sappadesa*, “in all places, all around”; *nippadesa*, “separately.” The phrases *sappadesa* and *nippadesa* are used and explained in **Attha,sālinī** (DhsA 2, 30, 37, 297, cf 206). Gethin gives a helpful explanation of this topic, but I have difficulty with his treatment of *sappadesa* and *nippadesa* (2001:210-212). See also VbhA:M 1:269 n112 which follows Ñāṇamoli’s tr at Vism 16.95 (Vism:Ñ 589). One point worth remembering, too, is that the same word or term used in a text (sutta) can mean differently in the Commentaries.

<sup>22</sup> Vism 16.95-101/514 f.

hands on his friend's shoulders, and is able to happily gather whatever flowers they want. Then adorning themselves with the flowers, they go about enjoying the festival.

Buddhaghosa explains that the three states—**right effort**, **right mindfulness** and **right samadhi**—arising together, are like the three friends who enter the park together. The mental object is like the champak tree in full bloom. **Concentration**, which cannot, by itself [of its own nature], bring about full concentration by mental one-pointedness (*ek'agga, bhāva*) through the object, is like the man who is unable to reach the flowers with his arm. **Effort** is like the companion who bends down, giving his back to climb upon. **Mindfulness** is like the friend who stands by, giving his shoulders for support.

So, standing on the one's back and supporting himself on the other's shoulders, he could gather as many flowers as he wants, so too, when *effort* accomplishes its task of exerting, and when *mindfulness* accomplishes its task of preventing mental wobbling (*apilāpana, kicca*), with such cooperation, *concentration* gains full concentration through mental oneness in the object.

So here in the concentration aggregate, it is only *concentration* that is included as being the same kind. But *effort* and *mindfulness* are included here, too, because of their (helping) function. In the case of **right view** and **right thought**, too, *wisdom* (by itself) cannot determine an object as being impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self. But with applied thought repeatedly hitting the object,<sup>23</sup> this is possible.

This is like **a banker or money-changer** (*heraññika*), who is unable to determine the kind or value of the coin or money just by looking. He has to turn each over and around to examine them with his fingers. Similarly, a practitioner needs to repeatedly direct his mind to the object, examining it over and again, so that we can determine its being impermanent, and so on. Hence, **right view** is included in the wisdom aggregate with only its own kind, but **right thought** is included on account of its (helping) function.

In this sense, the eightfold path is included in the 3 aggregates (training).<sup>24</sup>

2.2.3.3 “THE FRUITS OF RECLUSESHP.” That the eightfold path is *included* in or by the three trainings is prominently highlighted by their being known as “the fruits of recluseship” (*sāmañña, phala*). This is a very popular theme in the suttas, especially **the Dīgha Nikāya**, found in every one of its first 13 suttas.

The fruits of recluseship is a pericope or stock passage detailing the progress of a true disciple based on the gradual training. As **the 3 trainings**, it begins with moral virtue or “the moralities” (*sīla*)—famously known as the “chapter on the moral virtue aggregate” (*sīla-k, khandha vagga*), such as in **the Sāmañña, phala Sutta** (D 2),<sup>25</sup> followed by mental cultivation (§§64-86), the knowledge of supernormal powers (§§87-96), and wisdom, that is, the attainment of direct knowledge and liberating wisdom (§§97-100).

**2.3 MENTAL STILLNESS (SAMĀDHI) [§12].** **Question 11**, which naturally follows, is a brief statement on the nature of mental stillness, that is, on *samādhi, nimitta* and *samma-p, padhāna*. **Samadhi** (*samādhi*) is tersely defined as “the one-pointedness of mind” (*cittassa eka'ggatā*). Etymologically, *samādhi* means “the (mental) state of being firmly fixed” (*sam + ā + √DHĀ*, to put), that is, the fixing of the mind on a single object. It is related to the verb *samādahati*, “to put together” (S 1:169), as in *jotim samādahati*, “he kindles a fire (that is, puts together wood for a fire)” (V 4:115), or “to collect, compose” as in *cittam samādahati*, “he composes his mind, he concentrates” (M 1:116); and the past participle is *samāhita*, “composed, concentrated.” Hence, the overall sense of samadhi is not only of focused mind, but one that is steeped in stillness.<sup>26</sup>

What is interesting and novel here is Dhamma, dinnā's use the term *nimitta*, not in the more familiar sense of “sign,” especially “meditation sign,”<sup>27</sup> but as referring to the four focuses of mindfulness (*sati-paṭṭhāna*), comprising body-based meditations (*kāyānupassanā*), feeling-based meditation (*vedanā'nupassanā*), mind-based meditation (*cittānupassanā*), and reality-based meditation (*dhammānupassanā*).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ie, constantly directing [fully focusing] our attention on the mental object.

<sup>24</sup> Vism 16.97-101/515 f.

<sup>25</sup> (D 2.43-68/1:63-70) & SD 8.10 (3), **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1.8-27/1:4-11), SD 25.2.

<sup>26</sup> For details, see **Samādhi**, SD 33.1a (2.1.3.4).

<sup>27</sup> See **Nimitta**, SD 19.7.

<sup>28</sup> For details, see SD 13, a study of **Mahā Sati'paṭṭhāna S** (D 22) & **Sati'paṭṭhāna S** (M 10).

Understandably, *nimitta* here refers to applying our “mindfulness” (*sati*) to the various “focuses” or “foundations” (*upaṭṭhāna*) or meditation objects provided by the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10).<sup>29</sup>

The method for meditation is given as the 4 right efforts, or technically, the 4 right strivings (*samma-p, padhāna*), which is the term used here [§12.2]. They are defined in **the Mahā Sakul’udāyi Sutta** (M 77).<sup>30</sup> **The 4 right efforts** or strivings are defined as restraint (*saṃvara*), abandoning (*pahāna*), cultivation (*bhāvanā*) and guarding (*anurakkhana*), or more technically, the efforts for the non-arising of unarisen negative states, for the abandoning of arisen negative states, for the cultivation of unarisen wholesome states, and for the maintenance [guarding] of arisen wholesome states.<sup>31</sup>

#### 2.4 FORMATION (SINGULAR AND UNCOUNTABLE) [§§13-15]

**2.4.0 The 3 kinds of formation.** Questions 12-14 deals with *saṅkhāra* (singular, uncountable), which, in its plural form, serves as the second link of dependent arising.<sup>32</sup> These same questions are also asked by Citta the houselord to the monk **Kāma, bhū**, who gives the same answers, but in a different context.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, in both Suttas, the questioners are laymen non-returns, and the questions are asked as a result of their personal experience of deep meditation, and to know the minds of the respondents.<sup>34</sup>

This second-link *saṅkhāra* is defined in **the (Paṭicca, samuppāda) Vibhaṅga Sutta** (S 12.2) as the 3 kinds of “volitional formations” (*saṅkhārā*, plural), that is, bodily volitional activities, verbal volitional activities, and mental volitional activities.<sup>35</sup> As such, these are not the ethical or social manifestations of our actions, but the motivational roots (*mūla*) behind them.<sup>36</sup> These are the psychological realities that underlie our personality and conduct.

The Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta, similarly lists the 3 kinds of volitional formation, but the term here is *saṅkhāro*, singular, namely, *kāya, saṅkhāro*, *vacī, saṅkhāro*, and *citta, saṅkhāro*. The significance of this can be teased out from the related catechism in the Sutta. In answer to the layman Visākha’s question on *saṅkhāra* [§§13-15], the nun Dhamma, dinnā defines these three terms as follows, briefly, (1) bodily formation is our breathing; (2) verbal formation is thinking and pondering, and (3) thought formation is perception and feeling [2.4.4.2].

As a set, these three terms relate specifically to deep meditation, especially those leading to non-return and arhathood. In this connection, verbal formation (thinking and pondering) stops in the second dhyana. Bodily formation (the in-and-out breath) stops in the fourth dhyana. And thought formation (perception and feeling) stops during the attainment of cessation. [2.5]

Let us now further examine each of these three formations.

**2.4.1 Bodily formation** (*kāya, saṅkhāra*), which is more fully defined as follows: “**The in-and-out-breaths, avuso Visākha—these are states bound up with the body. Therefore, they are bodily formation**”<sup>37</sup> [§15.2]. Note that there is *no* mention (not explicitly anyway) of karma here. The reason for this is an important one: it refers specifically to the cessation of perception and feeling, experienced only by arhats and non-returns.

For this reason, too, the term *kāya, saṅkhāro* is in the singular and uncountable, unlike the “normal” formations (*saṅkhārā*) which is always in the plural. One simple explanation for this plurality is that an unawakened person is, as a rule, overwhelmed or influenced by his own thoughts—a condition known as “mental proliferation” (*papañca*).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>29</sup> M 10/1:55-63 @ SD 13.3.

<sup>30</sup> M 77,16/2:11), SD 6.8 @ SD 49.5.

<sup>31</sup> D 3:221; M 2:11; S 5:244; A 4.13/2:15, 4.14/2:16 f, 4.69/2:74; Vbh 208; cf A 4.14/2:16 f.

<sup>32</sup> See **Dependent arising**, SD 5.16.

<sup>33</sup> See §13.1 header n for cross-reference.

<sup>34</sup> **Kāma, bhū S 2** (S 41.6.9-24) + SD 48.7 (3.1).

<sup>35</sup> S 12.2,14/2:4 @ SD 5.15.

<sup>36</sup> On the 3 roots, see **The Three Roots Inc**, SD 31.123 (1.1.2).

<sup>37</sup> *Assāsa, passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāyikā ete dhammā kāya, paṭibaddhā. Tasmā assāsa, passāsā kāya, saṅkhāro.*

<sup>38</sup> See **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18/1:108-114) & SD 6.14 (2).

Another interesting point to note here is that the bodily formation, whether in the unawakened or awakened, is a *passive* process. The breath, for example, does not depend on any conscious effort (although we can, if we wish, take a conscious deep breath or hold our breath). Such “functional” (non-karmic) actions also include certain bodily habits, as in the case of Nigrodha Kappa, the elder Vaṅḡsa’s preceptor, who habitually sleeps with his hands curled up.<sup>39</sup>

**2.4.2 Verbal formation** (*vacī,saṅkhāra*) is defined, thus: “Avuso Visākha, **one, having first thought and pondered, then breaks out into speech. Therefore, thinking-and-pondering are verbal formation**”<sup>40</sup> [§15.2]. Again here this is not defined in an ethical manner (such as lying, etc), but a *psychological* one, as “thinking and pondering.” It seems like we have a bit of Buddhist psycholinguistics here. Some kind of mental speech or subverbalization occurs before we speak. Indeed, to “speak” is to articulate a language, which is learned since young and honed as we grow.

Yet, in our daily communications, we are almost never aware of the pre-linguistic or subverbal process. We simply speak, as it were, often at our own peril! However, in the definition of *vacī,saṅkhāro*, the Sutta clearly states that one speaks out having first thought out and pondered. According to the Sinhala forest monk, **K Ñāṇananda**,

This is a clear instance of the role of *saṅkhāra* as a “preparation” or a preliminary activity. Now the word “rehearsal” is in common use in the society. Sometimes, the day before a drama is staged for the society, a sort of trial performance is held. Similarly, before breaking out into speech, one thinks and ponders. That is why sometimes we find words issuing out before we can be aware of it. Thinking and pondering is called *vacī,saṅkhāro*, because they “prepare” speech. The sense of “preparation” is therefore quite apt. (2004:126 = 2010:162)

Clearly, the description here in the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta does not refer so much to the unawakened mind, as it does to the minds of saints, especially those of the arhats and the non-returners. Indeed, such saints are clearly mindful in their speech. Only after “thinking and pondering” (*vitakketvā vicāretvā*), do they actually speak. This is surely the reason that well-trained monastics would speak calmly and slowly—that is, to be more mindful and to emulate the saints.<sup>41</sup> This is possible because the minds of the arhat and the non-returner are very clear, with only “thought formation,” without “mental formations” [2.4.3].

**2.4.3 Thought formation** (*citta,saṅkhāra*) is defined as follows: “**Perception and feeling—these are mentally-connected states, bound up with the mind. Therefore, perception and feeling are thought formation**”<sup>42</sup> [§15.2]. Both perception and feeling are thought formation (*citta,saṅkhāra*, singular) (not “mental formations,” *mano,saṅkhārā*, plural): again, like *vacī,saṅkhāra*, they have to do only with the mind, that is, the mind of the arhat and the non-returner.

So, what is the difference between *mano,saṅkhārā* and *citta,saṅkhāra*?<sup>43</sup> This difference is important to understand: while “mental formations” (*mano,saṅkhārā*) (pl) lie at the root of all our karmic activities, “thought formation” (*citta,saṅkhārā*) refers only to the inner workings of the mind, to mentation, so to speak. Here, we see the process of mental formations as a *passive* process (*saṅkharīyati* or *saṅkharīyati*),<sup>44</sup> meaning that this is propelled by past karma or latent tendency in the unawakened, while thought formation is a natural non-karmic process, technically known as “functional consciousness” or *kiriya,citta*

<sup>39</sup> It is said that the elder **Nigrodha Kappa**, Vaṅḡsa’s preceptor, has the habit of curling up his hands (*hattha,kukkucca*) when he is sleeping. After his death, Vaṅḡsa has doubts of his arhathood (ThaA 3:199; SnA 1:346). The Buddha assured him that Kappa it is merely a personal habit, and has fully passed away (Tha1263 ff; Sn 343 ff).

<sup>40</sup> *Pubbe kho avuso visākha vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchā vācam bhindati. Tasmā vitakka,vicārā vacī,saṅkhāro.*

<sup>41</sup> Cf **Araṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 139), the Buddha advises monastics and Dharma-speakers, “You should speak without hurry, not hurriedly.” The reasons given is that it is less tiring to do; we are less likely to get a short throat (so we can speak longer); it is easier for others to understand us (M 139.11/3:234), SD 7.8.

<sup>42</sup> *Saññā ca vedanā ca cetasikā ete dhammā citta,paṭibaddhā. Tasmā saññā ca vedanā ca citta,saṅkhāro.*

<sup>43</sup> In their stem forms—as *mano,saṅkhāra* and *citta,saṅkhāra*—they can be somewhat confusing, as it seems as if *saṅkhāra* here are synonymous. This mnemonic is useful: *mano,saṅkhāra* (pl) and *citta,saṅkhāra* (sg); or, we could refer to them by their Pali form, as *mano,saṅkhārā* and *citta,saṅkhāro*.

<sup>44</sup> *Saṅkharīyati* (MA 2:364 ad M 44.13; SA 3:93 ad S 41.6.3; SA 3:202); *saṅkharīyati* (DA 2:547; YamA 80).

in the Commentaries.<sup>45</sup>

This is clear from the catechism’s context, where the questioner, the layman Visākha, is a non-returner, while the answerer, the nun Dhamma, dinnā, is an arhat, and they are here referring to their own minds, that is, those of a non-returner and an arhat. In other words, in terms of the aggregates (*khandha*), only perception and feeling occur in an arhat’s mind, but *not* formations (*saṅkhārā*, plural) as potent karma, because an arhat is beyond creating new karma.<sup>46</sup>

#### **2.4.4 Formations and formation**

2.4.4.1 FORMATIONS (*SAṅKHĀRĀ*, PLURAL, COUNTABLE). As a technical term, *saṅkhāra* appears both as a plural “formations” or “mental formations” (*mano,saṅkhārā*) and as a singular uncountable “formation” or “thought formation” [2.4.3], which is usually used in connection with the arhat. It is helpful to understand such formation (singular) as also being uncountable because they are no more “mental proliferation” (*papañca*),<sup>47</sup> as in the case of the unawakened. They do not multiply themselves, but simply arise and fall away as functional karma, that is, action without karmic consequences.

Instead of *mano,saṅkhārā*, the Sutta has *citta,saṅkhāro*. This usage, as we shall soon see, is deliberate, for an important reason [2.4.4.2]. *Citta,saṅkhāra* or “thought formation” (singular), on the other hand, is more specific and preliminary, found only in connection with perception and feeling.

*Mano,saṅkhārā* or “mental formations” (plural) refers to our active mental processes, such as intending, planning, imagining, worrying and so on. The quality of these mental processes depends on our emotional state, whether we are in a negative mood or in a positive mood. When we are *negative* (such as being angry), we form thoughts rooted in greed, hate or delusion: our intentions are driven by unwholesome forces. When we are *positive* (such as being happy), we think happy thoughts: our intentions are inspired by wholesomeness.

If we are not awakened, the negative tendencies are often stronger and deeper. Our “waking” mood or personality is merely a mask we wear and change at our *inconvenience*. It is not something we usually enjoy wearing, but we feel a compulsion for it due to the biases (*agatī*) of greed, hate, delusion or fear.<sup>48</sup> This masked self or “persona” is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg of emotions.

Deep down in the dark of our ancient hearts lurks the unseen puppet-master, playing with the strings of our perceptions and feelings, controlling our moods and movements, our ideas and ideals. Every puppet-master has his puppet show; he is the greatest puppet-master we will ever know, for we know no other. His play-house is a cavernous sense-surround 3-D cinema with the most sophisticated technisensual effects.

Our puppet-master plays only one show for us, and this is sufficient. It is a loop-run of the “I-me-mine” epic.<sup>49</sup> Actually, this is a self-funded, self-promoted, fully autobiographical reality show that we have made of ourselves, by ourselves, for ourselves. We are so enthralled by our self-images, every single frame of the movie, that we actually see these frozen moments as something moving. So moved are we by this self-love that we, when the reruns are fixed in our minds, we wonder who that great puppet-master is.

So we ask around, looking for a guru or prophet who would fulfill our vision. In due course, most of us, like Snow-white’s step-mother, discover the mirror of faith, and looking into it, we finally (so we think) have found the puppet-master. So we think that the puppet-master has created us in his own image.<sup>50</sup> This is the way the unawakened mind, as a rule, works.

2.4.4.2 FORMATION (*SAṅKHĀRO*, SINGULAR). From the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta definitions, it seems that the *saṅkhāra*, as the second link of dependent arising, comprises in-and-out-breathing [2.4.1], thinking

<sup>45</sup> PaṭA:Be 435,11.

<sup>46</sup> Further see **Samaṇa,maṇḍika S** (M 78/2:22-29), SD 18.9 & **Beyond good and evil**, SD 18.7.

<sup>47</sup> On *papañca*, see SD 6.14 (2).

<sup>48</sup> On the 4 biases, see **Sigal’ovāda S** (D 31,4+5), SD 4.1; **Saṅgha Bala S** (A 9.5.6d), SD 2.21; **Agatī S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7.

<sup>49</sup> On the significance of this, see these 3 essays: **I: The nature of identity**, SD 19.1; **Me: The nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a; **Mine: The nature of craving**, SD 19.3.

<sup>50</sup> Further see **Saṅkhāra**, SD 17.6.



and pondering [2.4.2], and perception and feeling [2.4.3] in the *active* sense (that is, as karmic activities). The nature of *passive* formation (*saṅkhāro*, singular) is discussed in **the Kāma,bhū Sutta 2** (S 41.6/-4:293). This latter set is used only in the context of the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling [2.5], and never used in connection with dependent arising.<sup>51</sup>

**Ñānananda**, in his Nibbāna Sermon 6, sees that the word *saṅkhāra*, in the context of a drama, where we need to prepare or rehearse our parts, that is, to re-arrange or re-fashion our minds for the stage. Even offstage, in our daily lives, we are still playing our parts, playing up to expectations of others, or as we view ourselves. Whenever we go out into the world, or even in our own comfort zone or privacy, when we are with others, even those we love, we need to prepare ourselves to truly communicate with them. One clear barometer of our actions and reactions in such moments, or even when we think of such moments, is in *how we breathe*. As Ñānananda insightfully observes,

Now this sense of preparation is applicable to in-breaths and out-breaths too. As we know, in all our bodily activities, particularly in lifting some weight and the like, or when exerting our selves, we sometimes take a deep breath, almost impulsively. That is to say, the most basic activity of this body is in-breathing and out-breathing. (2004:125 = 2010:162)<sup>52</sup>

When we mindfully think before we act or speak, and we act and speak mindfully and wholesomely, our breaths, too, tend to be calm and soft. In meditation, our breathing tends to become even more calm and soft, sometimes becoming imperceptible, as we enjoy a deepening stillness, or it might even simply stop, as it were, in dhyana.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, “verbal formation,” as defined here, reminds us that we should first carefully think and mindfully ponder over it what we are going to say before actually saying it; this also applies to writing or communicating in any way. In the wise and spiritually attained, this subverbalization would, of course, be faster, clearer and more wholesome than that in someone unwise or negative. Like *bodily formation*, this too, is a “preparatory” process for us in our better moments. In other words, we should constantly “rehearse” ourselves, as it were, before acting, looking before we leap.<sup>54</sup>

However, in the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta, this *verbal formation* is specifically that of the arhat or the non-returner. Both of them are saints who have overcome all sensual desires.<sup>55</sup> Hence, it is their nature to be mindful in their speech and all other actions. Their verbal formation (singular) is clear and immediate so as to be almost effortless and natural. The Buddha himself once declared that he does not even have to think of his answer to a Dharma question, as it comes at once naturally to him.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> The term *saṅkhāro* occurs some 154 times in **Vbh**, but in the pl sense of *saṅkhārā*, as clear, eg, from the Pacca-ya Catukka series, thus: *avijjā,paccayā saṅkhāro, saṅkhāra,paccayā viññāṇam, viññāṇa,paccayā nāmaṃ, nāma,-paccayā chaṭṭh'āyatanaṃ, chaṭṭh'āyatana,paccayā phasso, phassa,paccayā vedanā, vedanā,paccayā taṅhā, taṅhā,-paccayā upādānaṃ, upādāna,paccayā bhavo, bhava,paccayā jāti, jāti,paccayā jarā,marāṇam. Evam etassa keva-lassa dukkha-k,khandhassa samudayo hoti* (Vbh 138). As such, the Abhidhamma meaning of *saṅkhāro* differs from that of the sutta. Here, we follow its sutta meaning. See S:B 44-47 & 727 n7 (Abhidhamma aspects). See Brahma-vaṃso 2003b:56 f.

<sup>52</sup> K Ñānananda 2004:124-127 = 2010:160-163.

<sup>53</sup> During cessation of perception and feeling, the breath is said to actually stop for the whole duration (sometimes up to a week) [2.5]. See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4. On *cessation*, see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26.42/1:175), SD 1.11; see **Ma-hā Vedalla S** (M 43.25/1:296) & SD 30.2 (4), and **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.16-21/1:301 f) & SD 40a.9 (2.5).

<sup>54</sup> Further see **Saṅkhāra**, SD 17.6 esp (5) & SID: saṅkhāra.

<sup>55</sup> While **the arhat** has over all **the 10 fetters** (*dasa saṃyojana*)—(1) self-identity view; (2) spiritual doubt; (3) attachment to rituals and vows; (4) sensual lust; (5) aversion; (6) greed for form existence; (7) greed for formless existence; (8) conceit; (9) restlessness (or remorse); (10) ignorance—**the non-returner** (*anāgāmi*) has overcome the first 5 fetters.

<sup>56</sup> See **Abhaya Rāja,kumāra S** (M 58,9-11/1:395 f), SD 7.12. (Thanks to Bh Analayo for his help on locating this citation).

## 2.5 THE CESSATION OF PERCEPTION AND FEELING [§§16-21]

**2.5.1 Questions 15-20** are on the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha*), also called “the attainment of cessation” (*nirodha, samāpatti*).<sup>57</sup> The questions asked by the layman Visākha are the same ones asked by Citta the householder to the monk Kāma, bhū, who gives the same answers, but in a different context.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, in both texts, the questioner is a layman non-returner [2.4.0]. This is significant because only arhats and non-returners are able to attain such a cessation.<sup>59</sup>

**2.5.2 The duration of cessation.** To experience this cessation, the arhats or non-returners must have first mastered both the four dhyanas and the four attainments (that is, the formless dhyanas).<sup>60</sup> Before entering into cessation, the meditator would determine how long he would remain so. As a rule, the duration would not be more than a week, as beyond that the body would need to attend to natural needs and be properly sustained with food.

The Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta gives important details about this, saying that a meditator who is attaining cessation neither *thinks* about attaining nor about emerging from it, but does it all *naturally* [§§16+18]. This is just like breathing: we do not really need to think about it at all, but it just happens. The meaning of these statements by Dhammadinnā is that *neither thinking nor feeling* occurs for the whole of the duration of the cessation. The determination regarding the length of the cessation occurs well before the cessation begins.<sup>61</sup>

**2.5.3 The 3 kinds of contact.** On emerging from cessation, they experience the fruit of their respective attainment (Vism 708), that is, there arises the fruition of non-return (*anāgāmi, phala*) in the non-returner, and the fruition of arhathood (*arahatta, phala*) in the arhat (PmA 1:41, 321). As such, it is one possible way for experiencing nirvanic bliss.<sup>62</sup>

According to the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta, the first state of consciousness to arise on emerging from cessation is threefold, that is, **the emptiness, the signless and the undirected** [§20.2], all called “contact” (*phassa*) to denote *the arising of consciousness*. These conscious moments are so called because the mental object is nirvana, and these three names are those of the contact associated with fruition.

The Visuddhi, magga explains how cessation is attained by first entering each form dhyana and formless attainment, and then reflecting with insight any of the 3 characteristics (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self).<sup>63</sup> This means that if he enters the fruition attainment by reflecting on non-self, the fruition is called **the emptiness liberation**; if by reflecting on impermanence, it is called **the signless liberation**; and if by suffering, it is called **the desireless or undirected liberation**.<sup>64</sup>

However, generally speaking, all paths and fruits can be called by all three names because they take nirvana—which is empty, signless and undirected—as their object, and they all share the characteristics of being empty, signless, and undirected.<sup>65</sup>

These are about the best that language can be used to describe nirvanic experience: it is “empty” of this world or any realm. It is without any “sign” or characteristic or anything at all that we can describe it with: it cannot be predicated. It cannot be “directed” in any way, in terms of any desire, free of any purpose or goal. There is nothing else to do; the job, as it were, has been fully and blissfully accomplished.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>57</sup> On cessation, see **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,42/1:175), SD 1.11; see **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43,25/1:296) & SD 30.2 (4), and **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,16-21/1:301 f) & SD 40a.9 (2.5). For comy details, see Vism 23.16-52/702-709.

<sup>58</sup> See §16.1 header n for cross-reference.

<sup>59</sup> A 5.166/3:193 f; Vism 23.18/702, 23.49/708.

<sup>60</sup> On 4 form dhyanas, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (5); on 4 formless attainments, see **Paṭhama Jhāna Pañha S** (S 40.1) @ SD 24.11 (5).

<sup>61</sup> For details on the attainment of cessation, see SD 48.7 (3.2).

<sup>62</sup> On the cessation of perception and feeling, see **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43,25/1:296) & SD 30.2 (4).

<sup>63</sup> Vism 23.31-43/705-707.

<sup>64</sup> This n is also at SD 48.7 (3.2.1.4).

<sup>65</sup> See Abhs:BRS §37 (Guide), 1999:358, §42 (Guide), p363..

<sup>66</sup> On how the 3 characteristics (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, non-self) relate to these 3 contacts, ie, as liberation (*vimokkha*), see SD 48.7 (3.2.1.4). On cessation as arhathood or non-return, see also SD 47.15 (2.2).

**2.6 FEELINGS [§§22-24]. Questions 21-23** asked by the layman Visākha are on feelings (*vedanā*). Its answer by the nun Dhamma, dinnā gives us an important insight into the nature of feelings that is closely related to mindfulness and meditation. Her answer also highlights a significant difference between the Abhidhamma classification of feelings and the sutta method.

Now, we can speak of a set of 6 kinds of feelings, that is, according to *whether they are physical or mental*. A pleasant feeling, painful feeling or neutral feeling can be physical (*kāyika*) (arising through the 5 physical senses) or can be mental (*cetasika*) (arising through the mind), making 6 types of feelings in all.<sup>67</sup> The Abhidhamma classification has only 5 types of feeling, taking neutral feeling as being mental only, that is, one is only aware that a feeling is present (or not).<sup>68</sup>

In the **Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44), the nun Dhamma, dinnā gives a list of 6 kinds of feeling, that is, *pleasant, painful and neutral that are bodily and that are mental*. In the following question-and-answer, we are shown another important perspective on feelings, that is, all the 3 feelings—pleasant, painful and neutral—can in themselves also be *either pleasant (sukha) or painful (dukkha)*

<u>pleasant feeling</u> is	<i>pleasant</i> when it persists,	<i>painful</i> when it changes;
<u>painful feeling</u> is	<i>painful</i> when it persists,	<i>pleasant</i> when it changes;
<u>neutral feeling</u> is	<i>pleasant</i> when there is knowledge of it,	<i>painful</i> when there is no knowledge of it.”

(M 44,24/1:303), SD 40a.9

Here is a quick survey of our mental responses to the 3 feelings. When a pleasant feeling persists, we tend to *like* it, but when it ends, we tend to *dislike* it. When a painful feeling persists, we tend to *dislike* it, but when it ends, we tend to *like* it. Two important lessons can come from this. Firstly, it is that pain is inherent in pleasure, and pleasure is related to pain: they both work relative to one another. Secondly, that when we lack a perception of impermanence (when we do really understand the nature of impermanence), we are more likely to suffer on account of both pleasure and pain.<sup>69</sup>

## 2.7 LATENT TENDENCIES [§§25-28]

**2.7.1 Questions 24-27** go deeper into the nature of mind, and Visākha asks about “latent tendencies” (*anusaya*). They are so called because they have not been removed from our subconscious or life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*), where they lurk as latent tendencies (of lust, aversion and ignorance), and because they are capable of becoming active (as greed, hate and delusion) when the condition is right (MAṬ:Be 2:286).<sup>70</sup>

The questions and answers present some interesting new insights into the nature of latent tendencies. We learn from Visākha’s question itself that latent tendencies can lie in any kind of feelings, pleasant, painful and neutral [§25.1], and the nun Dhammadinnā then informs us that the latent tendency of lust lurks within a pleasant feeling, the latent tendency of aversion lurks in a painful feeling, and the latent tendency of ignorance lurks in a neutral feeling [§25.2].

**2.7.2 The latent tendency of lust.** We are further informed that the latent tendencies are *not inherent* in all feelings. In other words, there are pleasant feelings that have no latent tendency of lust, such as the bliss of the first dhyana [§28.3]. On account of this suppression by dhyana, it is said, “In that way, he abandons lust; no latent tendency of lust lies therein” [§28.4]. This, however, is only temporary suppression, but an effective one, as it helps us to better our meditation. With the development of insight, lust is then fully uprooted by the path of non-return (MA 2:368).

**2.7.3 The latent tendency of aversion.** It is said that when we are in the fourth dhyana, there is no fear of any latent tendency of aversion, since that dhyana is beyond pleasure and displeasure [§28.8].

<sup>67</sup> **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,23/1:302), SD 40a.9; **Sall’atthena S** (S 36.6/4:208), SD 5.5. See below, for other classifications of feelings.

<sup>68</sup> See *Vedanā*, SD 17.3 (1.1); for details on types of feelings, see (4): “classifications of feelings.”

<sup>69</sup> See **Nakula, pitā S** (S 22.1/3:1-5), SD 5.4.

<sup>70</sup> On the latent tendencies, see *Anusaya*, SD 31.3.

Again, in itself, this is only temporary respite. However, on account of its blissful stillness, insight can be cultivated for further spiritual progress.

In the section on abandoning the latent tendency of aversion [§§28.5-7], the Commentary explains that “that mental base” (*tad-āyatana*) and “**the supreme liberations**” (*anuttarā vimokkhā*) refer to arhat-hood.<sup>71</sup> Neither the suttas nor Commentaries explain why the phrase is in the plural, but we can surmise that it refers to the path of arhat-hood and its fruition. The uprooting of the latent tendencies is equivalent to the attaining of arhat-hood.

The “**sorrow that arises with that desire as condition**” is, in the **Sal’āyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137) called “pain [displeasure] based on renunciation” (*nekkhamasita domanassa*).<sup>72</sup> The Saṃyutta Commentary says that this is a “spiritual sorrow” (*nirāmisā dukkhā*, SA 3:79). Renunciation here does not refer to the external state of being a monastic, but to the progressive letting go of our defilements: those negative habits we are attached to are always painful and difficult to remove.

A better known term for the “sorrow” here, which arises with the struggle for awakening, is “restlessness” (*uddhacca*), or more specifically, “a dharma restlessness” or “a restlessness in mental states” (*dhamm’uddhacca*).<sup>73</sup> This is the subtles remnant of one of the 5 hindrances, and the fourth of the 5 higher fetters (D 3:234).<sup>74</sup>

The Commentaries explain that we do not actually abandon the latent tendency of aversion by means of that sorrow. Rather, motivated by the desire for the supreme liberations (arhat-hood), we are fired with resolve, and go on to uproot the latent tendency of aversion by attaining the path of non-return.<sup>75</sup> With that resolve, the mind settles down and becomes focused, so that the path is attained.

**2.7.4 The latent tendency of ignorance.** It is said that the latent tendency of ignorance lurks in a neutral feeling [§25.2]. With the profound bliss of equanimity, such as in the fourth dhyana, all kinds of feeling have been transcended. Hence, the latent tendency of ignorance, too, is absent, and with the attainment of arhat-hood, ignorance is totally uprooted (MA 2:369 f).

**2.8 OPPOSITES AND CONTRASTS (PAṬIBHĀGA) [§29].** The closing **question 28-34** deals with *paṭi-bhāga*, that is, the 7 key aspects [§29] and their contrary or contrasting qualities (except for the last case, nirvana). The general idea here is to present an overview of the relativity amongst feelings, knowledge and liberation, and how this leads to nirvana. If something has an opposite (in real or existential terms), it means that it is not absolute, and that its nature or conception is meaningful only because its opposite, or contrasting it with something else. But whatever can be contrasted in this way must be relative.

For example, ignorance is said to be the opposite of neutral feeling because the latter is subtle and difficult to detect. Each time we *ignore* a neutral feeling, we reinforce our ignorance of it; we learn nothing of it. The remedy here is to review “neutral-feeling” experiences, especially after a meditation, or after any significant event in our lives, or as a daily practice, that is, to reflect on them as being *impermanent*.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> MA 2:53, 368, 5:23.

<sup>72</sup> M 137,13/3:218 @ SD 29.5.

<sup>73</sup> On uddhacca as a subtle imperfection, see SD 32.7 (2.1.4).

<sup>74</sup> Ie, the 9<sup>th</sup> of the **10 fetters** (*dasa saṃyojana*), viz: (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), (2) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), (4) sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), (5) aversion (*paṭigha*), (6) greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), (7) greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), (8) conceit (*māna*), (9) restlessness (or remorse) (*uddhacca*), (10) ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61; A 5:13; Vbh 377). In some places, no 5 (*kāma,rāga*) is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*orambhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*). The abandonment of the lower 5 fetters makes one a non-returner (*opapātika* or *anāgāmi*): see **Ānāpānasati S** (M 118,10 @ SD 7.13). On the streamwinner, see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3. See also **Kiṭṭagiri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5.1).

<sup>75</sup> DA 3:725; MA 2:369; SA 3:83.

<sup>76</sup> On the nature of neutral feelings, see **Vedanā**, SD 17.3 (4.10). On the perception of impermanence, see **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/5:225) + SD 16.7.

**Nirvana** is unique. In intellectual or worldly terms, it may be understood as “sub specie aeternitatis,” that is, something eternal, universal, nothing to do with time.<sup>77</sup> By its very nature—as the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*)—it has no opposite or comparison.<sup>78</sup> In a manner of speaking, the way out of suffering is called “nirvana,” but this is merely to inspire and move us with the fact and possibility of the way out of suffering. Since nirvana is unconditioned, it has neither an opposite nor a complement.

### 3 The nun Dhamma,dinnā and the layman Visākha

**3.1** Dhamma,dinnā is an eminent elder nun (*therī*), declared by the Buddha as the foremost of nuns who are Dharma teachers (A 1:25). She is the former wife of Visākha, a merchant and lay disciple of Rāja,gaha (MA 2:355), who, upon hearing the Buddha teaching, becomes a non-returner.<sup>79</sup> Since he is no longer inclined to live a marital or worldly life as he has done before, he offers Dhamma,dinnā his wealth and the freedom to do whatever she feels appropriate.

Dhamma,dinnā declares, “Husband (*ayya,putta*),<sup>80</sup> I will not swallow what has been vomitted by you.<sup>81</sup> Permit me to go forth!”<sup>82</sup> Visākha consents and sends her to the nunnery in a golden palanquin.<sup>83</sup>

Dwelling in solitude, she soon attains arhathood along with the 4 analytic knowledges (*paṭisambhidā*)<sup>84</sup> within a very short time (Thī 12). She later returns to Rāja,gaha to honour the Buddha. Visākha, surprised at her early return, wonders if she is discontented with the training. So he visits her in the nuns’ quarters to question her so as to discover her level of attainment.<sup>85</sup> [3.3]

**3.2** In the (Mula-) Sarvāstivāda Vinaya, Dhamma,dinnā is called **Dharma,dattā**, and it gives a different account of her going-forth. Even as a young girl, she wishes to renounce, but her parents object, saying that she has been betrothed to the merchant’s son, Visākha.

The nun Uṭpala,varṇā, who often visits her house to teach Dharma, secretly administers the 10 precepts to her so that she practises as a celibate life. She progressively becomes a streamwinner and finally an arhat. All this is kept secret. She marries Visākha, but during the wedding procession, when he tries to grab her hand, she rises into the air, and so her spiritual state is now public knowledge, and as a result, she is allowed by her husband to be ordained.<sup>86</sup>

**3.3** The Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta is a catechism of questions asked by the layman Visākha and answers given by the nun Dhamma,dinnā. After Dhamma,dinnā has gone forth, she leaves Rāja,gaha to go into solitary retreat, attains arhathood in a very short time. Then she returns to Rāja,gaha to honour the Buddha. When Visākha learns that she has returned so soon from seclusion, he visits her to find out the reason for her early return. [3.1]

<sup>77</sup> This is at best an attempt at conceptualizing nirvana, something beyond conception, like trying to imagine how someone really feels when we have not even met that person. Hence, negative language (“not this, not that”) sometime help, that is, in understanding what nirvana is *not*. On “sub specie aeternitatis,” see SD 26.8 (1.1.3). See also **The Buddha’s silence**, SD 44.1.

<sup>78</sup> In other words, it cannot be predicated: see **Unanswered questions**, SD 40a.10 (7). It is helpful to remember that we are only *talking* about nirvana here (it’s like talking about the sunset), but we need to experience it in due course. See **Language and discourse**, SD 26.11 (1).

<sup>79</sup> ThīA 16 :: ThīA:P 26.

<sup>80</sup> *Ayya,putta* (voc), liy “young noble son,” or “young master, young lord, noble son (of family).” Here, however, the context dictates “Husband.”

<sup>81</sup> On this “vomitting” figure, cf **Dh 97**, SD 10.6 (7).

<sup>82</sup> *Nāhaṃ ayya,putta tayā vantavamaṇāṃ ācamissāmi, pabbajjāṃ me anujānāhīti* (ThīA 16).

<sup>83</sup> ThīA 16. Provided by king Bimbisāra, according to MA 1:357. Aṅguttara Comu says that he first informs the king before sending her in a golden palanquin (AA 1:361).

<sup>84</sup> The 4 analytic skills (*catu paṭisambhidā*) are those in effects (denotative meaning) (*attha,paṭisambhidā*), in causes and conditions (*dhamma,paṭisambhidā*), in language and verbal expression (*nirutti,paṭisambhidā*), and in ready wit or analytic skill (*paṭibhāna,paṭisambhidā*) (A 2:160; Pm 1:119; Vbh 294; MA 1:119): see SD 28.4 (4).

<sup>85</sup> AA 1:362; ThīA 19. On her attaining of streamwinning, etc, see ThīA 19 f.

<sup>86</sup> See Finnegan 2009:156-160, 202-207.

According to the commentary, the questions asked by the non-returner Visākha is to examine Dhamma,dinnā's wisdom, to determine if she has actually attained her goal, or if she has given up her training. Visākha questions her on the 5 aggregates and so on. She answers his questions easily like someone "cutting a lotus stalk with a sharp knife" (ThīA 19). The questions and answers are recorded in **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44). Visākha reports this interview to the Buddha, who praises her great wisdom and eloquence. It is on this occasion, too, that the Buddha declares Dhamma,dinnā as the foremost amongst nuns who teach the Dharma (A 1:25; ThīA 19).

3.4 The same account occurs with some variations in the Commentaries.<sup>87</sup> Dhamma,dinnā's past and present lives are also recounted in **the Therī Apadāna**.<sup>88</sup>

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## The Discourse on the Shorter Catechism

M 44

1 [299] Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was dwelling in the squirrels' feeding ground in the Bamboo Grove near Rāja,gaha.

1.2 Then, the layman Visākha approached the nun Dhamma,dinnā. Having gone up to her, saluted her and sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, the layman Visākha said this to the nun Dhamma,dinnā.

### SELF-IDENTITY (*SAKKĀYA*)

#### Self-identity

2 (1) "Ayya,<sup>89</sup> 'self-identity, self-identity' (*sakkāya*), it is said. What now, ayya, is this self-identity as spoken by the Blessed One?"

2.2 "Avuso Visākha, it is these 5 aggregates of clinging that the Blessed One speaks of as being self-identity,<sup>90</sup> that is to say:

The aggregate of clinging that is <u>form</u> ,	<i>rūpūpādāna-k,khandha</i>
The aggregate of clinging that is <u>feeling</u> ,	<i>vedanūpādāna-k,khandha</i>
The aggregate of clinging that is <u>perception</u> .	<i>saññūpādāna-k,khandha</i>
The aggregate of clinging that is <u>formations</u> .	<i>sāṅkhārūpādāna-k,khandha</i>
The aggregate of clinging that is <u>consciousness</u> .	<i>viññāṇūpādāna-k,khandha</i>

2.3 These, avuso Visākha, are the 5 aggregates of clinging that the Blessed One speaks of as being self-identity."

2.4 "Sadhu. ayya!" the layman Visākha joyfully approved of the nun Dhamma,dinnā's word, and then asked another question.

<sup>87</sup> AA 1:36 (tr Bode 1893:562-566; summarized by Talim 1972:117 f); ThīA 15 (tr or summarized: Rhys Davids 1909:12; Murcott 1991:62; Pruitt 1998:26-30); DhA 4:229 (tr Burlingame 1921c:226-227).

<sup>88</sup> Ap 567-569/23.1-36.

<sup>89</sup> Anglicization of *ayyā* or *ayye* ("venerable lady") is the feminine equivalent of "bhante" (Eng) or *bhante* ("venerable sir"). In the Buddha's time, both forms were common ways of addressing seniors or employers, but in due course came to be more used of monastics.

<sup>90</sup> *Pañca kho ime āvuso visākha upādānakkhandhā sakkāyo vutto bhagavatā.*

### The arising of self-identity

3 (2) “Ayya, ‘**the arising of self-identity, the arising of self-identity**’ (*sakkāya,samudaya*), it is said. What now, ayya, is this arising of self-identity as spoken by the Blessed One?”

3.2 “Avuso Visākha, it is this craving that leads to renewed existence [rebirth], accompanied by pleasure and lust, seeking pleasure here and there;<sup>91</sup> that is to say,<sup>92</sup>

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. craving for sensual pleasures,              | <i>kāma,taṇhā</i>    |
| 2. craving for existence,                      | <i>bhava,taṇhā</i>   |
| 3. craving for non-existence [for extinction]. | <i>vibhava,taṇhā</i> |

3.3 This, avuso Visākha, is the arising of self-identity as spoken by the Blessed One.”

### The ending of self-identity

4 (3) “Ayya, ‘**the ending of self-identity, the ending of self-identity**’ (*sakkāya,nirodha*), it is said. What now, ayya, is this ending of self-identity as spoken by the Blessed One?”

4.2 “Avuso Visākha, it is the utter fading away and ending of that very craving, giving it up, letting it go, being free from it, being detached from it.<sup>93</sup>

4.3 This, avuso Visākha, is the ending of self-identity as spoken by the Blessed One.”

### The path leading to the ending of self-identity

5 (4) “Ayya, ‘**the path leading to the ending of self-identity, the path leading to the ending of self-identity**’ (*sakkāya,nirodha,gāminī paṭipadā*), it is said. What now, ayya, is this path leading to the ending of self-identity as spoken by the Blessed One?”

5.2 “Avuso Visākha, it is this very noble eightfold path, that is spoken of by the Blessed One as being the path leading to the ending of self-identity, that is to say,

- |                                     |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. right view,                      | <i>sammā,dīṭṭhi</i>   |
| 2. right thought [right intention], | <i>sammā,saṅkappa</i> |
| 3. right speech,                    | <i>sammā,vācā</i>     |
| 4. right action,                    | <i>sammā,kammanta</i> |
| 5. right livelihood,                | <i>sammā,ājīva</i>    |
| 6. right effort,                    | <i>sammā,vāyāma</i>   |
| 7. right mindfulness,               | <i>sammā,sati</i>     |
| 8. right samadhi.”                  | <i>sammā,samādhi</i>  |

### Clinging

6 (5) “Now, ayya, is that **clinging the same as these 5 aggregates of clinging, or is it other than [different from] these 5 aggregates of clinging?**”<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup> *Yāyam āvuso visākha taṇhā pono,bhavikā nandi,rāga,sahagatā tatra tatrābhinandinī.*

<sup>92</sup> Comy to **Bhāra S** (S 22.22 @ SD 17.14): “Seeking delight here and there” (*tatra,tatrābhinandinī*) means having the habit of seeking delight in the place of rebirth or among the various objects, such as forms. “**Craving for sense-pleasures**” (*kāma,taṇhā*) means lust for the 5 cords of sense-pleasures. Lust for form-sphere existence or formless-sphere existence, attachment to dhyana, and lust accompanied by the eternalist view: this is called “**craving for existence**” (*bhava,taṇhā*). Lust accompanied by the annihilationist view is “craving for annihilation [extinction]” (*vibhava,taṇhā*). (SA 2:264). **Bodhi**: “This explanation of the last two kinds of craving seems to me too narrow. More likely, craving for existence should be understood as the principal desire to continue in existence (whether supported by a view or not), craving for extermination as the desire for a complete end to existence, based on an underlying assumption (not necessarily formulated as a view) that such extermination brings an end to a real ‘I.’” (S:B 1052 n38). This is in fact the def of the second noble truth, that of the arising of suffering: see **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11.6/5:421), SD 1.1.

<sup>93</sup> *Yo kho āvuso visākha tassā,y’eva [or tassa-y-eva] taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo,* This is in fact the def of the second noble truth, that of the arising of suffering: see **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11.7/5:421), SD 1.1.

6.2 “That clinging, avuso Visākha, is *neither* the same as these 5 aggregates of clinging, [300] *nor* is it other than [different from] these 5 aggregates of clinging.”<sup>95</sup>

6.3 Avuso Visākha, it is the desire-and-lust (*chanda,rāga*) in these 5 aggregates of clinging that are the clinging therein.”<sup>96</sup>

## SELF-IDENTITY VIEW (*SAKKĀYA,DIṬṬHI*)

### Arising of self-identity view

7 (6) “How now, ayya, does self-identity arise [come about]?”<sup>97</sup>

7.2 “Here, āvuso Visākha, an untutored ordinary person who is not a seer of the noble ones [the aryas], and is unskilled in the Dharma of the noble ones, undisciplined in the Dharma of the noble ones, who is not a seer of the true persons,<sup>98</sup> and is unskilled in the Dharma of the true persons and undisciplined in the Dharma of the true persons, considers<sup>99</sup> thus:<sup>100</sup>

7.3 THE 20 KINDS OF SELF-IDENTITY VIEWS (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*)<sup>101</sup>

- (1) form as the self, or the self as possessing *form*, or *form* as in the self, or the self as in *form*;
- (2) feelings as the self, or the self as possessing *feelings*, or *feelings* as in the self, or the self as in *feelings*;
- (3) perception as the self, or the self as possessing *perception*, or *perception* as in the self, or the self as in *perception*;
- (4) formations as the self, or the self as possessing *formations*, or *formations* as in the self, or the self as in *formations*;
- (5) consciousness as the self, or the self as possessing *consciousness*, or *consciousness* as in the self, or the self as in *consciousness*.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>94</sup> *Tañ-ñ-eva nu kho ayye upādānaṃ te ca pañc’upādāna-k,khandhā, udāhu aññaṃ nu kho pañca-h-upādāna-k,-khandhehi upādānaṃ’ti?*

<sup>95</sup> *Na kho āvuso visākha tañ-ñ-eva upādānaṃ, t’eva pañc’upādāna-k,khandhā, na’pi aññatra pañcah’upādāna-k,-khandhehi upādānaṃ.*

<sup>96</sup> *Yo kho āvuso visākha pañcas’upādānakkhandhesu chanda,rāgo, taṃ tattha upādānaṃ’ti.*

<sup>97</sup> *Kathaṃ pan’ayye sakkāya,diṭṭhi hotīti?* On self-identity, see SD 40a.12 (3.2.4).

<sup>98</sup> “True person,” *sappurisa*, also “virtuous person,” “ideal person.” The qualities of a *sappurisa* are given at D 33.2.2(6)/3:252, 34.1.8(7)/3:283; M 113; A 7.64/4:113, 8:38/4:144 f & at M 110.14-24/3:23 f.

<sup>99</sup> “Considers,” *samanupassati* = *sam* (completeness) + *anu* (after) + *passati* (he sees), ie, to look at (here, without wisdom).

<sup>100</sup> **Paṭisambhidā,magga** illustrates the 4 basic modes of self-identity view in connection with *form* in this manner. One might wrongly regard form as self in the way that the flame of a burning oil-lamp is identical to the colour of the flame. Or one might wrongly regard self as possessing form just as a tree possesses a shadow. Or one might wrongly regard form as in self as the scent is in the flower. Or one might wrongly regard self as in form, as a jewel is in a casket. (Pm 1:153 f). For details, see SD 2.16 (15.2.1).

<sup>100</sup> **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,7 f/1:300), too, lists these 20 kinds of self-identity view in connection with the 5 aggregates. The Cūḷa Vedalla S comy (MA 2:360) here qu **Paṭisambhidā,magga** to illustrate the 4 basic modes of self-identity view in regard to *form*: see prec n on Pm 1:143 f.

<sup>101</sup> This section [§7.2] and its counterpart at §8.2 are stock, eg **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44/1:300), SD 40a.9, **Mahā Puṇṇama S** (M 109.10/3:17 f) = **Puṇṇama S** (S 22.82/3:102-104), SD 17.11; **Bhadd’eka,ratta S** (M 131/3:188, 189), **Ānanda Bhadd’eka,ratta S** (M 132/3:190 f), **Uddesa Vibhaṅga S** (M 138/3:227, 228); **Nakula,pitu S** (S 22.1/3:3, 4), **Upādā,paritassanā S** (S 22.6/3:15, 17), **Atta,dīpa S** (S 22.43/3:42, 43), **Paṭipadā S** (S 22.44/3:44), **Samanupassanā S** (S 22.47/3:46), **Udāna S** (S 22.55/3:56, 57), **Pāḷeyya S** (S 22.81/3:96, 97), **Yamaka S** (S 22.-85/3:113, 114), **Nadī S** (S 22.93/3:138), **Gaddula Baddha S** (S 22.99/3:150), **Bandhana S** (S 22.117/3:164, 165), **Isi,datta S 2** (S 41.3/4:287). **Vaccha,gotta S** (S 44.8/4:396, 397; **Pema S** (A 4.200/2:214, 215); **Nc:Be** 186 (“self-view,” *attā’nudīṭṭhi*), 271; **Pm** 143-150, 156; **Dhs** 182, 213, 220, 22; **Vbh** 364, 368, 375).

<sup>102</sup> The Chinese version refers to these 4 self-identity views only as 見我 *jiàn wǒ*, 異我 *yì wǒ*, 相我 *xiāng wǒ*, “seeing as I, as other than I, as mutually present” (SĀ 58 = T2.14c29). Choong 2000:59 draws attention to two Saṃyukta



This, āvuso Visākha, is how self-identity view arises [comes about].

### Non-arising of self-identity view

**8 (7) “How now, ayya, does self-identity *not* arise [come about]?”**

8.2 “Here, avuso Visākha, a learned noble disciple who is a seer of the noble ones, and is skilled in the Dharma of the noble ones, disciplined in the Dharma of the noble ones, who is a seer of the true persons, and is skilled in the Dharma of the true persons and disciplined in the Dharma of the true persons, does *not* consider thus:<sup>103</sup>

8.3 THE 20 KINDS OF SELF-IDENTITY VIEWS (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*)

1. form as the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form;
2. feelings as the self, or the self as possessing feelings, or feelings as in the self, or the self as in feelings;
3. perception as the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception;
4. formations as the self, or the self as possessing formations, or formations as in the self, or the self as in formations;
5. consciousness as the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

This, avuso Visākha, is how self-identity view does not arise.”<sup>104</sup>

### THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH (*AṬṬH’AṄGIKA ARIYA, MAGGA*)

**9 (8) “What now, ayya, is the noble eightfold path?”**

9.2 “Avuso Visākha, it is this very noble eightfold path, that is to say,

- |                                     |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. right view,                      | <i>sammā,diṭṭhi</i>   |
| 2. right thought [right intention], | <i>sammā,saṅkappa</i> |
| 3. right speech,                    | <i>sammā,vācā</i>     |
| 4. right action,                    | <i>sammā,kammanta</i> |
| 5. right livelihood,                | <i>sammā,ājīva</i> .  |
| 6. right effort,                    | <i>sammā,vāyāma</i>   |
| 7. right mindfulness,               | <i>sammā,sati</i>     |
| 8. right samadhi.”                  | <i>sammā,samādhi</i>  |

**10 (9) “Now, ayya, is the noble eightfold path conditioned or is it unconditioned?”<sup>105</sup>**

10.2 “The noble eightfold path, avuso Visākha, [301] is conditioned.

**11 (10) “Now, ayya, are the 3 aggregates<sup>106</sup> included in the noble eightfold path, or is the noble eightfold path included in the 3 aggregates?”<sup>107</sup>**

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Āgama sutras that are helpful here. The first, SĀ 45 = T2.11b5, describes the viewing of self in regard to the aggregate of form as 見色是我 *jiàn sè shì wǒ*, 色異我 *sè yì wó*, 我在色 *wǒ zài sè*, 色在我 *sè zài wǒ*; and SĀ 109 = T2.34b-13, giving a similar list but slightly shorter, 見色是我, 異我, 我在色, 色在我. “Thus,” notes **Analayo**, “見我 and 異我 refer to identifying the aggregate of self and to taking the aggregate to be owned by the self, corresponding to *rūpaṃ attato samanupassati* and *rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ* in M 109/3:17,27.” The Madhyama Āgama version of this formula such as that in MĀ 210 = T1.788a28 (parallel to M 44/1:300,7) is more intelligible: 見色是神 *jiàn sè shì shén*, 見神有色 *jiàn shén yǒu sè*, 見神中有色 *jiàn shén zhōng yǒu sè*, 見神中有色也 *jiàn shén zhōng yǒu sè yě*. (See Analayo 2011:631 n218).

<sup>103</sup> For details, see SD 2.16 (15.2.1).

<sup>104</sup> For refs on the 20 kinds of wrong views, see §7.3 n above.

<sup>105</sup> *Ariyo pan’ayye aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅkhato udāhu asaṅkhato’ti?*

- 11.2 “The 3 aggregates, avuso Visākha, are *not* included in the noble eightfold path.<sup>108</sup>
- 11.3 But, avuso Visākha, it is the noble eightfold path that is included in the 3 aggregates,<sup>109</sup> thus:
1. right speech, right action and right livelihood—these factors are included in the aggregate of moral virtue;
  2. right effort, right mindfulness, and right samadhi—these factors are included in the aggregate of samadhi [mental stillness];<sup>110</sup>
  3. right view and right thought [right intention]—these factors are included in the aggregate of wisdom.

### MENTAL CULTIVATION (*SAMĀDHI*)

**12 (11) “Now, ayya,  
what is mental cultivation?  
What are the objects of mental cultivation?  
What are the requisites of mental cultivation?  
What is the cultivation of samadhi?”**<sup>111</sup>

12.2 “Avuso Visākha, the one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek’aggatā*)—this is **samadhi** [mental stillness].<sup>112</sup>

The 4 focuses of mindfulness (*sati’paṭṭhāna*)—these are the mental signs (*nimitta*) for samadhi.<sup>113</sup>

The 4 right efforts (*samma-p.padhāna*)—these are the requisites of samadhi.<sup>114</sup>

These states that are much cultivated, associated with, grown—this is here the **cultivation** of samadhi.<sup>115</sup>

### FORMATION (*SAṆKHĀRA*)<sup>116</sup>

**13 (12) “Ayya, how many kinds of formation are there?”**<sup>117</sup>

13.2 “Avuso Visākha, there are these 3 kinds of formation.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Here *khandha* is used in a non-technical sense to refer to the 3 “trainings” (*sikkhā*) or aspects of the noble eightfold path, ie, the aggregates of moral virtue (*sīla-k,khandha*), or mental cultivation (*samādhi-k,khandha*) and of wisdom (*paññā-k,khandha*).

<sup>107</sup> *Ariyena nu kho ayye aṭṭh’āṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahītā, udāhu tīhi khandhehi ariyo aṭṭh’āṅgiko maggo saṅgahīto’ti?*

<sup>108</sup> *Na kho āvuso visākha ariyena aṭṭh’āṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahītā.*

<sup>109</sup> *Tīhi ca kho āvuso visākha khandhehi ariyo aṭṭh’āṅgiko maggo saṅgahīto.*

<sup>110</sup> On *samādhi* as “mental stillness,” see SD 8.4 (6.5.2).

<sup>111</sup> *Katamo pan’ayye samādhi. Katamo samādhi,nimittā, katamo samādhi,parikkhārā, katamā samādhi,bhāvanā’ti?*

<sup>112</sup> See **Samadhi**, SD 33.1a (1.2).

<sup>113</sup> *Cattāro sati’paṭṭhānā samādhi,nimittā.* Here, *nimitta* has a non-technical sense of “mental object,” ie, what we focus or “work on” during meditation, that is to say, one of the 4 satipatthanas (contemplations of the body, of feelings, of the mind, and of dhammas): see SD 13.1 (3.1.4): *Nimitta*.

<sup>114</sup> On the 4 right efforts (to restrain an undone bad, to abandon a done bad, to cultivate an undone good, and to maintain a done good), see (**Catu**) **Padhāna S** (A 4.14), SD 10.2.

<sup>115</sup> *Yā tesam’yeva dhammānaṃ āsevanā bhāvanā bahulī,kammaṃ, ayaṃ tattha samādhi bhāvanā’ti.* Here, *samādhi* has a broad sense, incl the preliminary practices and efforts, the overcoming of the mental hindrances, and the attainment of dhyana.

<sup>116</sup> The catechisms here dealing with formation (*saṅkhāra*) [§13-15] and the foll on cessation (*nirodha*) [§16-21] —ie M 1:301,17-302,5—parallel those in **Kāma,bhū S 2** (S 4.6), where Citta the houselord questions the monk Kāma,bhū (S 41.6/4:293,7-294,10), SD 48.7. Cf **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43.23-25/1:295,37-296,6), SD 30.2.

<sup>117</sup> *Kati pan’ayye saṅkhārā’ti?* This is the same question (no 1) that the Citta the householder (a non-returner) asks the arhat elder Kāma,bhū, and the answer is the same, too: see **Kāma,bhū S** (S 41.61,3/4:293), SD 48.7.

bodily formation,	<i>kāya,saṅkhāra</i>
verbal formation,	<i>vacī,saṅkhāra</i>
thought formation.	<i>citta,saṅkhāra</i>

**14 (13) “But what, ayya, is bodily formation, what is verbal formation, what is thought formation?”<sup>119</sup>**

14.2 “Avuso Visākha,

The in-and-out breaths, are bodily formation.<sup>120</sup>

Thinking and pondering are verbal formation.<sup>121</sup>

Perception and feeling are thought formation.<sup>122</sup>

**15 (14) “But, ayya,**

**why are the in-and-out-breaths                      bodily formation;**

**why are thinking and pondering                      verbal formation;**

**why are perception and feeling                      thought formation?”<sup>123</sup>**

15.2 “The in-and-out-breaths, avuso Visākha—these are states bound up with the body.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, they are bodily formation.<sup>125</sup>

15.3 Avuso Visākha, one, having first thought and pondered, then breaks out into speech. Therefore, thinking and pondering are verbal formation.<sup>126</sup>

15.4 Perception and feeling—these are mentally-connected states, bound up with the mind. Therefore, perception and feeling are thought formation.<sup>127</sup>

## THE ATTAINMENT OF THE CESSATION OF PERCEPTION AND FEELING

(*SAÑÑĀ, VEDAYITA, NIRODHA, SAMĀPATTI*)<sup>128</sup>

**16 (15) “Now, ayya, how does the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling occur?”<sup>129</sup>**

16.2 “Avuso Visākha, in a monk who is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, it does *not* occur to him thus:

‘I will attain                      the cessation of perception and feeling,’ or

‘I am attaining                      the cessation of perception and feeling,’ or

<sup>118</sup> *Tayo ’me āvuso visākha saṅkhārā: kāya,saṅkhāro vacī,saṅkhāro citta,saṅkhāro ’ti.* Note here that the terms related to *saṅkhāra* are all singular. See Intro (2.4).

<sup>119</sup> *Katamo pan ’ayye kāya,saṅkhāro, katamo vacī,saṅkhāro, katamo citta,saṅkhāro ’ti?* This is the same question (no 2) that the Citta the householder (a non-returner) asks the arhat elder Kāma.bhū, and the answer is the same, too: see **Kāma,bhū S** (S 41.6,5/4:293), SD 48.7.

<sup>120</sup> *Assāsa,passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāya,saṅkhāro:* note that *saṅkhāro* is sg. See Intro (2.4.1).

<sup>121</sup> *Vitakka,vicārā vacī,saṅkhāro:* note that *saṅkhāro* is sg. See Intro (2.4.2).

<sup>122</sup> *Saññā ca vedanā ca citta,saṅkhāro:* note that *saṅkhāro* is sg. See Intro (2.4.3).

<sup>123</sup> This is the same question (no 3) that the Citta the householder (a non-returner) asks the arhat elder Kāma.bhū, and the answer is the same, too: see **Kāma,bhū S** (S 41.61,7/4:293), SD 48.7.

<sup>124</sup> “Bound up with...” (*paṭibaddha*), ie, dependent upon or coexistent with.

<sup>125</sup> *Assāsa,passāsā kho āvuso visākha kāyikā ete dhammā kāya,paṭibaddhā. Tasmā assāsa,passāsā kāya,saṅkhāro.* See SD 7.13 (2): The breath.

<sup>126</sup> *Pubbe kho āvuso visākha vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchā vācamṃ bhindati. Tasmā vitakka,vicārā vacī,saṅkhāro* (M 44,15/1:301), SD 40a.9.

<sup>127</sup> *Saññā ca vedanā ca cetasikā ete dhammā citta,paṭibaddhā. Tasmā saññā ca vedanā ca citta,saṅkhāro ’ti.*

<sup>128</sup> The catechisms here on cessation [§16-21] and the preceding on formation (*saṅkhāra*) [§13-25]—ie M 1:302,6-27—parallel those in **Kāma,bhū S 2** (S 41.6), where Citta the householder questions the monk Kāma,bhū (S 41.6/-4:294,26-295,21), SD 48.7. Cf **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43,25/1:296,11-23), SD 30.2. See Intro (2.5).

<sup>129</sup> This is the same question (no 4) that the Citta the householder (a non-returner) asks the arhat elder Kāma.bhū, and the answer is the same, too: see **Kāma,bhū S** (S 41.61,9/4:293), SD 48.7.

‘I have attained the cessation of perception and feeling.’

16.3 Rather, his mind has been so cultivated before that it naturally gets into that state.”<sup>130</sup>

**17 (16) “When a monk is *attaining* cessation of perception and feeling, [302] ayya, which states end first: bodily formation, or verbal formation, or thought formation?”<sup>131</sup>**

17.2 “When a monk is attaining cessation of perception and feeling, avuso Visākha, verbal formation ends first, then bodily formation, and then thought formation.”

**18 (17) “And how, ayya, does emergence from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling occur?”<sup>132</sup>**

18.2 “Avuso Visākha, in a monk who is emerging from the cessation of perception and feeling, it does *not* occur to him thus:

‘I will emerge from the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling,’ or

‘I am emerging from the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling,’ or

‘I have emerged from the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling.’

18.3 *Rather, his mind has been so cultivated before that it naturally gets into that state.*”<sup>133</sup>

**19 (18) “When a monk is *emerging* from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, ayya, which states arise first: bodily formation, or verbal formation, or thought formation?”<sup>134</sup>**

19.2 “For a monk emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, avuso Visākha, thought formation arises first, then bodily formation, and then verbal formation.”

**20 (19) “Now, ayya, when a monk has emerged from the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling, how many kinds of contacts touch him?”<sup>135</sup>**

20.2 “A monk who has emerged from the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling, avuso Visākha, 3 kinds of contacts touch him, that is,

the empty contact,	<i>suññata phassa</i>
the signless contact,	<i>animitta phassa</i>
the undirected contact.” <sup>136</sup>	<i>appaṇihita phassa</i>

**21 (20) “Ayya, when a monk has emerged from the attainment of perception and feeling, to what does his mind bend, to what does it slope, to what does it tend?”<sup>137</sup>**

21.2 “The mind of a monk who has emerged from the attainment of perception and feeling, avuso Visākha, bends to solitude, slopes to solitude, tends to solitude.”<sup>138</sup>

<sup>130</sup> *Atha khvāssa pubb’eva tathā cittaṃ bhāvitam hoti yan-taṃ tathattāya upanēṭī = §18.3.*

<sup>131</sup> This is the same question (no 5) that the Citta the householder (a non-returner) asks the arhat elder Kāma.bhū, and the answer is the same, too: see **Kāma,bhū S** (S 41.61,11/4:294), SD 48.7.

<sup>132</sup> This is the same question (no 7) that the Citta the householder (a non-returner) asks the arhat elder Kāma.bhū, and the answer is the same, too: see **Kāma,bhū S** (S 41.61,15/4:294), SD 48.7.

<sup>133</sup> *Atha khvāssa pubb’eva tathā cittaṃ bhāvitam hoti yan-taṃ tathattāya upanēṭī = §16.3.*

<sup>134</sup> This is the same question (no 8) that the Citta the householder (a non-returner) asks the arhat elder Kāma.bhū, and the answer is the same, too: see **Kāma,bhū S** (S 41.61,17/4:294), SD 48.7.

<sup>135</sup> This is the same question (no 9) that the Citta the householder (a non-returner) asks the arhat elder Kāma.bhū, and the answer is the same, too: see **Kāma,bhū S** (S 41.61,19/4:295), SD 48.7.

<sup>136</sup> See (2.5.3).

<sup>137</sup> *Saññā,vedayita,nirodha,samāpattiyā vuṭṭhitassa paṇ’ayye bhikkhuno kin-ninnaṃ cittaṃ hoti kim,poṇaṃ kim,-pabbhāraṇ’i?* This is the same question (no 10) that the Citta the householder (a non-returner) asks the arhat elder Kāma.bhū, and the answer is the same, too: see **Kāma,bhū S** (S 41.61,3/4:295), SD 48.7.

<sup>138</sup> *Viveka,ninnaṃ cittaṃ hoti viveka,poṇaṃ viveka,pabbhāra* recurs in **Kāma,bhū S 2** (S 41.6/4:292-295), SD 48.7; see above §13.1 n. A more common stock is that of “who bends towards nirvana, slopes towards nirvana, tends towards nirvana,” *nibbāna,ninnaṃ hoti nibbāna,poṇaṃ nibbāna,pabbhāro*: **Mahā Vaccha S** (M 73,14/1:493); **Mahā.nāma S 2** (S 55.22,4.2/5:371), **Dāru-k,khandhōpama S 1** (S 35.241/4:180), **Pācīna Ninna S 1-6** (S 45.115-120/5:41), **Samudda Ninna S 1-6** (S 45.121-126/5:41), **Pācīna Ninna S 7-12** (S 45.127-132/5:41), **Samudda Ninna S 7-12** (S 133-138/5:41). This phrasing is a way of stressing the fact that streamwinning surely ends in

## FEELINGS

22 (21) “Now, ayya, how many kinds of feelings are there?”

22.2 “Avuso Visākha, there are these 3 kinds of feelings:

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. pleasant feeling,                               | <i>sukhā vedanā</i>           |
| 2. painful feeling,                                | <i>dukkhā vedanā</i>          |
| 3. neither pleasant nor painful [neutral] feeling. | <i>adukkham-asukhā vedanā</i> |

23 (22) “What now, ayya, are pleasant feeling, painful feeling, and neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling?”

23.2 “Whatever, avuso Visākha, is felt *bodily* or *mentally* as pleasant or agreeable—this is pleasant feeling.<sup>139</sup>

Whatever, avuso Visākha, is felt *bodily* or *mentally* as painful or disagreeable—this is painful feeling.<sup>140</sup>

Whatever, avuso Visākha, is felt *bodily* or *mentally* as being neither disagreeable nor agreeable—this is neither-pleasant-nor-painful [neutral] [303] feeling.<sup>141</sup>

24 (23) “Now, ayya,

regarding <u>pleasant feeling</u> ,	what is pleasant,	what is painful, <sup>142</sup>
regarding <u>painful feeling</u> ,	what is painful,	what is pleasant? <sup>143</sup>
regarding <u>neutral feeling</u> ,	what is pleasant,	what is painful? <sup>144</sup>

24.2 “Avuso Visākha,

<u>pleasant feeling</u> is	<i>pleasant</i> when it persists,	<i>painful</i> when it changes; <sup>145</sup>
<u>painful feeling</u> is	<i>painful</i> when it persists,	<i>pleasant</i> when it changes; <sup>146</sup>
<u>neutral feeling</u> is	<i>pleasant</i> when there is knowledge of it,	<i>painful</i> when there is no knowledge of it.” <sup>147</sup>

## LATENT TENDENCIES (ANUSAYA)

25 (24) “Now, ayya,

what latent tendency lies <sup>148</sup> in	a pleasant feeling?
what latent tendency lies in	a painful feeling?
what latent tendency lies in	a neutral feeling?”

25.2 “Avuso Visākha,

The latent tendency of lust	<i>rāgānusaya</i>	lies in a pleasant feeling.
The latent tendency of aversion	<i>paṭighānusaya</i>	lies in a painful feeling.
The latent tendency of ignorance	<i>avijjā’nusaya</i>	lies in a neutral feeling.” <sup>149</sup>

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arhathood in due course. In fact, the very notion of a “stream” (*sota*) is to show that the journey of awakening has begun before we become fully awoken at the journey’s end.

<sup>139</sup> *Yaṃ kho āvuso visākha kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā sukhaṃ sātāṃ vedayitaṃ, ayaṃ sukhā vedanā.*

<sup>140</sup> *Yaṃ kho āvuso visākha kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā dukkhaṃ asātāṃ vedayitaṃ, ayaṃ dukkhā vedanā.*

<sup>141</sup> *Yaṃ kho āvuso visākha kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā n’evasātāṃ nāsātāṃ vedayitaṃ, ayaṃ adukkham-asukhā vedanā’ti.*

<sup>142</sup> *Sukhā pan’ayye vedanā kiṃ, sukhā, kiṃ, dukkhā?*

<sup>143</sup> *Dukkhaṃ vedanā kiṃ, dukkhā kiṃ, sukhā?*

<sup>144</sup> *Adukkham-asukhā vedanā kiṃ, sukhā kiṃ, dukkhā’ti?*

<sup>145</sup> *Sukhā kho āvuso visākha vedanā ṭhiti, sukhā vipariṇāma, dukkhā.*

<sup>146</sup> *Dukkhaṃ vedanā ṭhiti, dukkhā vipariṇāma, sukhā.*

<sup>147</sup> *Adukkham-asukhā vedanā nāṇa, sukhā aññāṇa, dukkhā.*

<sup>148</sup> The phrase *anusayo anuseti* can be translated either as “the latent tendency lies [underlies] (in)...” or as “the latent tendency lies latent (in)...” depending on the context.

26 (25) “Ayya,  
**is the latent tendency of lust latent in**                      **all pleasant feelings?**  
**is the latent tendency of aversion latent in**                      **all painful feelings?**  
**is the latent tendency of ignorance latent in**                      **all neutral feelings?”**

26.2 “Avuso,  
the latent tendency of lust is *not* latent in                      all pleasant feelings;  
the latent tendency of aversion is *not* latent in                      all painful feelings;  
the latent tendency of ignorance is *not* latent in                      all neutral feelings.<sup>150</sup>

27 (26) “Now, ayya,  
**what should be abandoned with regard to**                      **a pleasant feeling?**  
**what should be abandoned with regard to**                      **a painful feeling?**  
**what should be abandoned with regard to**                      **a neutral feeling?”**

27.2 “Avuso Visākha,  
with regard to pleasant feeling,                      the latent tendency of *lust*                      should be abandoned;  
with regard to painful feeling,                      the latent tendency of *aversion*                      should be abandoned;  
with regard to neutral feeling,                      the latent tendency of *ignorance*                      should be abandoned.

28 (27) “Now, ayya,  
**must all the latent tendency of lust**                      **be abandoned with regard to *pleasant* feelings?**  
**must all the latent tendency of aversion**                      **be abandoned with regard to *painful* feelings?**  
**must all the latent tendency of ignorance**                      **be abandoned with regard to *neutral* feelings?”**

28.2 “Avuso Visākha,  
not all *pleasant* feelings                      have a latent tendency of lust that should be abandoned,<sup>151</sup>  
not all *painful* feelings                      have a latent tendency of aversion that should be abandoned;  
not all *neutral* feelings                      have a latent tendency of ignorance that should be abandoned.

28.3 (1) Here, avuso Visākha, a monk, quite detached from sensual pleasures, detached from unwholesome mental states, enters and dwells in **the first dhyana**, accompanied by *initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and joy, born of seclusion*.<sup>152</sup>

28.4 In that way, he abandons lust; no latent tendency of lust lies therein.<sup>153</sup>

28.5 (2) Here, avuso Visākha, a monk considers thus:

‘Now when shall I attain and dwell in *that mental base* that the noble ones [aryas] attain and dwell in?’<sup>154</sup>

28.6 In whom there arises such a desire for being established in *the supreme liberations*, [304] sorrow arises on account of that desire.<sup>155</sup>

28.7 In that way, he abandons aversion; no latent tendency of aversion lies therein.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>149</sup> For a basic idea on how this works (the “triangle of experience”), see **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18,16), SD 6.14; **Mahā Hatthi,padōjama S** (M 28,27-38), SD 6.16. On how the latent tendencies (lust, aversion, ignorance) arise or is reinforced, see **Sall’atthēna S** (S 36.6,8), SD 5.5.

<sup>150</sup> The explanation for this para will be apparent in §28.

<sup>151</sup> *Na kho āvuso visākha sabbāya sukhāya vedanāya rāgānusayo pahātabbo.*

<sup>152</sup> *Idh’āvuso visākha bhikkhu vivicc’eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi sa,vitakkaṃ sa,vicāraṃ viveka,jam pīti,sukhaṃ paṭhamam jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.*

<sup>153</sup> *Rāgaṃ tena pajahati, na tattha rāgānusayo anuseti.*

<sup>154</sup> *Idh’āvuso visākha bhikkhu iti paṭisañcikkhati: kudassu nāmāhaṃ tad-āyatanam upasampajja viharissāmi, yad-ariyā etarahi āyatanam upasampajja viharantīti.* See Intro (2.7.3).

<sup>155</sup> *Iti anuttaresu vimokkhesu pihaṃ upaṭṭhāpayato uppajjati, piha-p,paccayā domanassaṃ.* See Intro (2.7.3).

<sup>156</sup> Comys explain that we do not actually abandon the latent tendency of aversion by means of that sorrow. Rather, motivated by the desire for the supreme liberations (arhathood), we are fired with resolve, and go on to uproot the latent tendency of aversion by attaining the path of non-return (DA 3:725; MA 2:369; SA 3:83). With that resolve, the mind settles down and becomes focused, so that the path is attained. See [2.7.3].

28.8 (3) Here, avuso Visākha, with the abandoning of joy and abandoning of pain, and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure, a monk attains and dwells in **the fourth dhyana** that is neither painful nor pleasant, and with *mindfulness fully purified by equanimity*.<sup>157</sup>

28.9 In that way, he abandons ignorance; no latent tendency of ignorance lies therein.<sup>158</sup>

### OPPOSITES AND COUNTERPARTS (*PAṬIBHĀGA*)<sup>159</sup>

29 (28) “**Now, ayya, what is the opposite<sup>160</sup> of pleasant feeling?**”

“A painful feeling, avuso Visākha, is the opposite of a pleasant feeling.”<sup>161</sup>

29.2 (29) “**Now, ayya, what is the opposite of painful feeling?**”

“A pleasant feeling, avuso Visākha, is the opposite of a painful feeling.”<sup>162</sup>

29.3 (30) “**Now, ayya, what is the opposite of neutral feeling?**”

“Ignorance, avuso Visākha, is the opposite of a neutral feeling.”<sup>163</sup>

29.4 (31) “**Now, ayya, what is the opposite of ignorance?**”

“True knowledge (*vijjā*), avuso Visākha, is the opposite of ignorance.”

29.5 (32) “**Now, ayya, what is the opposite [counterpart]<sup>164</sup> of true knowledge?**”

“Liberation (*vimutti*), avuso Visākha, is the opposite of true knowledge.”

29.6 (33) “**Now, ayya, what is the opposite [counterpart] of liberation?**” [what contrasts with liberation?]

“Nirvana, avuso Visākha, is the opposite of liberation.” [Nirvana...contrasts with liberation.]

29.7 (34) “**Now, ayya, what is the opposite [counterpart] of nirvana?**” [what contrasts with nirvana?]

“Avuso Visākha, you have exceeded the question! You are unable to grasp the limit of the question.”<sup>165</sup>

29.8 For, avuso Visākha, the holy life is grounded in nirvana, has nirvana as the far shore, nirvana as its end.<sup>166</sup>

<sup>157</sup> *Idh'āvuso visākha bhikkhu sukhasa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubb'eva somanassa' domanassānaṃ atthagamā adukkhaṃ asukhaṃ upekkhā, sati, pārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.* Here, **Vibhaṅga** gives 3 factors of the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana—equanimity (*upekkhā*), mindfulness (*sati*) and one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek'-aggatā*)—according to the Sutta analysis (Vbh 261), and 2 factors—equanimity and one-pointedness of the mind—according to the Abhidhamma analysis (Vbh 164; Vism 4.183/165). See **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (5.4).

<sup>158</sup> See Intro (2.7.4).

<sup>159</sup> Here, *paṭibhāga* means both opposition and complementarity; “contrast” reflects both ideas well: see Intro (2.8).

<sup>160</sup> *Paṭibhāga* is usu tr (in comys) as “counterpart, resemblance, likeness” (SnA 65, 76, 83, 114, 265; PvA 46, 178, 279); but the Sutta context here dictates that we tr as “opposite, contrary” (M 1:304) (see PED sv). In a few cases, it can also mean “incomparable, supreme” (Miln 357; DhA 1:423). A J 6:341, it means “reply or rejoinder.”

<sup>161</sup> *Sukhāya kho āvuso visākha vedanāya dukkhā vedanā paṭibhāgo'ti.*

<sup>162</sup> *Dukkhāya kho āvuso visākha vedanāya sukkhā vedanā paṭibhāgo'ti.*

<sup>163</sup> *Adukkham-asukhāya kho āvuso visākha vedanāya avijjā paṭibhāgo'ti.*

<sup>164</sup> Here and in the foll 2 paras, *paṭibhāga* has a special sense of “opposing” or “contrasting” (rather than the usual “opposite”), meaning something “stands” in between what we are now and the better we can be, or a reflection (“contrast” or “counterpart”) of that better state in our present state,

<sup>165</sup> *Accasar'āvuso visākha pañham. Nāsakkhi pañhānaṃ pariyaṇaṃ gahetuṃ.* Be *accayāsi*; Ce Ee Ke Se *accasarā* (aor of *atisarati*, “he transgresses”). Both *accayāsi* and *accasarā* are applicable here. These 2 sentences are in **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.29/1:304); **(Khandha) Māra S** (S 23.1/3:189); **Uṇṇābha Brāhmaṇa S** (S 48.42/5:218), SD 29.3; AA 1:362. On nirvana as “sub specie aeternitatis,” see (2.8).

<sup>166</sup> *Nibbān'ogadham hi āvuso visākha brahma, cariyāṃ nibbāna parāyaṇaṃ nibbāna pariyoṣānaṃ.* It's not that nirvana cannot be understood at all, but that Visākha, not yet an arhat, would not be able to understand even if she were to answer him (AA 1:362).

29.9 And if you wish, avuso Visākha, you might approach the Blessed One to ask him about the meaning of this, and remember whatever he answers you.

### The Buddha praises Dhamma,dinnā

**30** Then the layman Visākha, having joyfully approved of the nun's Dhamma,dinnā's word, rose from his seat, saluted her.

Keeping his right side to the nun Dhamma,dinnā, he approached the Blessed One.

30.2 Having approached the Blessed One, he saluted him and then sat down at one side.

Sitting thus at one side, the layman Visākha related the whole conversation he has had with the nun Dhamma,dinnā.

When this was said, the Blessed One said this to the layman Visākha:

**31** "Wise, Visākha, is the nun Dhamma,dinnā! Of great wisdom, Visākha, is the nun Dhamma,dinnā!

If you, Visākha, had asked me about its meaning, I, too, would have explained it in just the same way [305] as has been explained by the nun Dhamma,dinnā.

31.2 And such indeed is its meaning: you should remember it as such!

31.3 The Blessed One said this. The layman Visākha joyfully approved of the Blessed One's word.

— evaṃ —

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